

Message Text

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ACTION COA-02

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PASS NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE/ NAKATSU

S/ FW- COA

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: EFIS, TBIO, JA

SUBJECT: POLLUTION JAPANESE COASTAL WATERS AND EFFECT ON FISHING
INDUSTRY

SUMMARY. DISCOVERY OF EIGHT NEW PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM MINAMATA DISEASE (MERCURY POISONING) HAS SPARKED FAR REACHING CONSUMER REACTION TO FISH PRODUCTS IN JAPAN AND HAS CREATED MAJOR CRISES IN JAPAN FISHING INDUSTRY. FISH SALES DOWN 30-50 PERCENT, PRICES GENERALLY DECLINED MORE THAN 50 PERCENT, 4,700 FISHERMEN UNEMPLOYED ARIAKE SEA ALONE. MINISTRY HEALTH AND WELFARE ANNOUNCED NEW STANDARDS FOR MERCURY IN FISH ON JUNE 25 - 0.3 PPM METHLY MERCURY ANE 0.4 PPM TOTAL MERCURY, MAXIMUM LEVEL FOR INTAKE OF METHYL MERCURY 0.17 MILIGRAMS/ ADULT (50 KG. BODY WEIGHT)/ WEEK. FORTUNATELY, ACTION SHOULD NOT EFFECT JAPANIMPORTS U. S. FISH PRODUCTS SINCE METHYL MERCURY SALMON, HERRING, CRAB, VARIUS ROE WELL BELOW 0.3 PPM LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

1. ON MAY 22 (1973) TEAM HEADED BY PROFESSOR TADO TAKEUCHI, (MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, KUMAMOTO UNIVERSITY) SUBMITTED REPORT TO GOVERNOR SAWADA (KUMAMOTO PREFECTURE) STATING THAT EIGHT PATIENTS FROM VICINITY ARIAKE SEA (KYUSHU) SUFFIERING FROM MERCURY POISONING. THIS WAS REPORTED AS THIRD OUTBREAK
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MINAMATA DISEASE FROM MERCURY POSIONING FIRST OCCURRING
SOME 20 YERS PREVIOUSLY SAME GENERAL AREA FOLLOWED BY SECOND
OUTBREAK ALONG AGANO RIVER (NNIGATA).

2. ALTHOUGH PROFESSOR TAKEUCHI EMPHASIZED IN REPORT THAT
EXCEPT FOR A FEW LOCAL AREAS, FISH AND SHELLFISH FROM ARIAKE
SEA DID NOT CONTAIN ENOUGH MERCURY TO CAUSE MINAMATA DISEASE
AND SAFE TO EAT, FISHERMAN THEMSELVES IN KUMAMOTO, SAGA,
FUKUOKA AND NAGASAKI PREFECTURES (BORDERING ARIAKE SEA) SHOCKED
BY REPORT AND VOLUNTARILY STOPPED FISHING. FISHERMEN
IMMEDIATELY SENT SEVERAL GROUPS TO TOKYO TO URGE FISHERY AGENCY,
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, HEALTH AND WELFARE MINISTRY, AND MITI TO
RESTORE WATER QUALITY ARIAKE SEA.

3. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER (JUNE 1), DIRECTOR- GENERAL MIKI
(ENVIRONMENT AGENCY) TOLD ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE LOWER HOUSE
THAT (1) NATION WIDE STUDY OF MERCURY WOULD BE INITIATED, (2)
PRESENT LAW FOR PREVENTION OF WATER POLLUTION WOULD BE RE-
EXAMINED, (3) LEGISLATION TO COMPENSATE FISHERMEN FOR ECONOMIC LOSS
FROM POLLUTION MUST BE ENACTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, (4) PERMISSABLE
LEVELS OF MERCURY IN FISH AND SHELLFISH WOULD BE ESTABLISHED AT
THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE, AND (5) SOME INTERIM COMPENSATION FOR
FISHERMEN BE PROVIDED.

4. ON JUNE 6 DIRECTOR- GENERAL ARAKATSU (FISHERIES AGENCY) TOLD
FORESTRY/ FISHERIES COMMITTEE LOWER HOUSE THAT FISHERY AGENCY
WOULD TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PROVIDE GOVERNMENT LOAN 500,000
YEN (4 \$1,9011 PER FISHERMAN 3 TO 5 PERCENT INTEREST FROM
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES FINANCE CORPORATION. HOWEVER,
BOTH ARAKATSU AND AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY MINISTER SAKURAUCHI
COULD NOT MAKE COMMITMENT TO COMPENSATE FISHERMEN FOR FULL LOSS
DUE LIMITED BUDGET AND PRESENT GOVERNMENT POLICY PPP - POLLUTER
PAYS PRINCIPLE.

5. IN ADDITION TO MERCURY PROBLEM, THE FISHERY AGENCY RELEASED
JUNE 4. REPORT ON PCB STUDY IN COASTAL WATERS (CONDUCTED SINCE
FEBRUARY 1973). IN SUMMARY, AND SHELLFISH 1,677 MARINE, 596
FRESHWATER TOTAL 2,273 SAMPLES FISH AND SHELLFISH, BOTTOM SAMPLES
301 AREAS, AND WATER SAMPLES 14 AREAS (13 PERFECTURES). RESULTS
SHOW 6.7 PERCENT FISH AND SHELLFISH EXCEED PERMISSABLE LEVEL 3
PPM PCB. FOLLOWING EIGHT AREAS INVOLVED: SEKI RIVER (NIIGATA),
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TSURGA BAY (FUKUI), NORTHWESTERN OSAKA BAY (HYOGO), VICINITY
HARAMAADA (HYODO), VICINITY IWAKUNI (YAMAGUCHI), BEPPU BAY (OITA),
YODO AND YURA RIVERS (KYOTO) AND LAKE BIWA / SEAT RIVER (SHIGA).
FISHERY AGENCY HAS DIRECTED GOVERNORS OF THE SEVEN PREFECTURES TO
CLOSE THESE AREAS TO BOTH COMMERCIAL AND SPORTSFHISING.

6. EFFECT OF POLLUTION SCARE ON FISH SALES IN JAPAN HAS BEEN A

MAJOR DISASTER TO FISHING INDUSTRY: (1) 4,700 FISHERMEN AROUND THE ARIAKE SEA ALONE ARE OUT OF WORK: (2) FISH MARKETS WEST OF OSAKA HAVE SUSPENDED BUYING FISH FROM POLLUTED AREAS: (3) CONSUMERS SCARED AND NOT BUYING FISH (TOKYO SALES AT TSUKIJI HAVE DROPPED 30 TO 50 PERCENT AND PRICES MORE THAN 50 PERCENT- ON THE CONTRARY, SALES OF PORK HAVE INCREASED 20-30 PERCENT, CHICKEN 15-20 PERCENT, EGGS 10 PERCENT); (4) CONSUMER REACTION HAS SPREAD TO FISH FROM UNPOLLUTED WATERS (SUCH AS HOKKAIDO) AND EVEN TO DISTANT WATER FISH (AFRICAN CUTTLEFISH); (5) SUDDEN DROP IN DEMAND HAS NOW EFFECTED INCOME ALMOST ALL FISHERMEN IN JAPAN AND THERE HAVE BEEN A SERIES OF DEMONSTRATIONS, SIT- INS, AND PERHAPS MOST EFFECTIVE- THE SCATTERING OF WELL- DECOMPOSED FISH IN AND AROUND APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT OFFICE BUILDINGS (NATION- WIDE DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED FOR JULY 6).

7. TODAY MINISTRY HEALTH AND WELFARE ANNOUNCED STANDARDS FOR MERCURY IN FISH (1) MAXIMUM LEVEL FOR INTAKE OF METHYL MERCURY 0.17 MILGIGRAMS/ ADJUT (50 KG. BODY WEIGHT)/ WEEK, (2) TENTATIVE STANDARDS FOR MERCURY IN FISH 0.4 PPM TOTAL MERCURY 0.3 PPM METHYL MERCURY (TENTATIVE STANDARDS DO NOT APPLY TORIVER FISH OR TUNA AND TUNA- LIKE FISHES.

8. FORTUNATELY, NEW STANDARDS SHOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON JAPANESE IMPORTS U. S. FISH PRODUCTS. MERCURY LEVELS FOUND BY USFDA FOR SALMON, HERRING, CRAB, AND VARIOUS ROE ARE WELL BELOW THE 0.3 PPM LEVEL SET BY JAPAN. FURTHER, THESE SAME FISH PRODUCTS ARE AMONG THE FEW EXCEPTIONS TO PRESENT CONSUMER REACTION AND PRICES HAVE REMAINED UNCHANGED, POSSIBLY MAY INCREASE.
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